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ABSTRACT

Addressing the problems of the educationally disadvantaged requires specifically focused educational reforms. This paper: (1) describes the population of disadvantaged students in terms of its composition, growth, and educational performance; (2) reviews the dire consequences of ignoring the educational needs of these students; (3) discusses the failure of current educational reforms to address their special needs; (4) sets an agenda for filling that gap; and (5) discusses implications for policy, strategy, and action. The proportion of disadvantaged students--including those in poverty and those whose chances of educational success are handicapped due to linguistic and cultural obstacles--is increasing and the degree of their disadvantage is rising. Unless the nation responds to the imminent crisis, deleterious consequences will include: (1) a two-tiered society, leading to (2) serious political conflict and potential social disruption, (3) long-term deterioration in the quality of the labor force, and (4) escalated costs for public assistance and criminal justice. Reform strategies must enrich the preschool experience, augment home and school resources, and assist students with limited English proficiency. All levels of government and other constituencies must adhere to a policy agenda which includes the establishment of goals, accountability, resources, and technical assistance. (ETS)

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Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis

Henry M. Levin

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Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis

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Foreword

Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis is one of a series of SEARCH publications that offer new perspectives on equity and excellence in American schools. The papers are authored by highly regarded experts in education.

Henry M. Levin here argues persuasively that America is heading for an imminent crisis through its failure to address properly the educational needs of the disadvantaged. Soon students from poor and minority backgrounds—the very children we are failing to educate adequately—will become a majority of the school population. Our continued failure to meet their needs will result in devastating social and economic costs. Invest in the education of the disadvantaged now, counsels Levin. Place the challenge of the disadvantaged on the policy agenda. Implement specific reforms as outlined in the body of this important paper.

NEA Instruction and Professional Development proudly presents this document under the SEARCH title to NEA members and all those dedicated to equity and excellence in education.

Introduction

A casual glance at the media would suggest that the United States is now experiencing a great renaissance in elementary and secondary education. During the last three years, over a dozen national reports have been produced by special commissions and scholars outlining the case for educational reform as well as specific strategies that should be followed (Griesemer and Butler, 1983). The states have responded with proposals and legislation which follow closely the recommendations in the national reports (U.S. Department of Education, 1984).

Although the calls for reform have argued for an overall upgrading of educational standards and suggested particular strategies to achieve them, they tend to be much narrower than their purported goals would suggest. One major shortcoming is that they have relatively little to offer educationally disadvantaged students.

Pupils who are defined as educationally disadvantaged lack the home and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and experience a high secondary school drop-out rate. Typically, such students are heavily concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, non-English-speaking families, and economically disadvantaged populations. The data reviewed in this paper suggest that they represent about one-third of elementary and secondary students in the United States at the present time and that this proportion will rise rapidly in the future. When educationally disadvantaged pupils reach adulthood, their poor educational foundation has deleterious economic and social consequences, including a high rate of unemployment, low income, dependence on public assistance, and a higher rate of criminal involvement.

The thesis of this paper is that we are heading for an imminent crisis if we do not address successfully the problems of the educationally disadvantaged. The recent educational reforms are not likely to succeed in doing this because they do not address the pertinent issues. There are effective ways of providing appropriate educational services so that the rapidly increasing population of educationally disadvantaged youths does not automatically grow up to be a rising population of disadvantaged adults. It is argued that the benefits of such policies far exceed the costs.

The paper first describes the population of educationally disadvantaged students in terms of its composition, growth, and educational performance. Second, it reviews the dire consequences of ignoring the educational needs of these students. Third, it discusses in some detail the failure of the educational reforms to address their special needs. Fourth, an agenda is set out for filling that gap. Finally, the implications of the analysis for policy, strategy, and action are discussed.

Educationally Disadvantaged Students

Among all student populations there will be substantial individual variation in educational performance. However, by virtue of the accident of birth, some groups of students are destined to experience only the most limited educational progress under the present system of schooling. Their differences seem to be a function, particularly, of such socioeconomic factors as parental education, income, and race. Persons from non-White, Hispanic, and immigrant families and from households where parents have low income and little education tend to complete fewer years of schooling, are more likely to drop out of high school, and show lower test scores in virtually all academic subjects than their more advantaged peers. These are the educationally disadvantaged.

Schools in the United States are least successful in reaching this population. They are most successful in assisting youngsters from families in which the parents have at least graduated from high school and undertaken some college, the income level covers basic needs and allows some discretion in expenditures, the housing provides adequate shelter and individual privacy for reflection or study, and the language spoken in the home is a standard version of English—that which is commonly used in written communications, employment, and the performance of civic responsibilities. All these factors contribute to the educational process by supporting the skills, values, and language that schools emphasize and by providing the additional resources in the home that reinforce schooling practices. It is also important for children to be surrounded by persons who have succeeded both educationally and economically so that the connection between education and future economic success is made concrete. When students lack these advantages, conventional schooling tends to be much less successful in meeting their needs.

Educational Performance

Although the last two decades have seen some movement to provide compensatory education—particularly under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and its successor, Chapter I of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981—such programs have been modest in their ambitions and financial base. Typically, they have focused on only a portion of the disadvantaged, and the resource base that they have provided has been far short of what is required to make a substantial difference. The evidence suggests that such policies have effected small reductions in the test-score gap between White and non-White students over time (Burton and Jones, 1982; National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:54-56). Even so, the educational performance of disadvantaged students lags considerably behind that of their more advantaged counterparts, and they are more likely to drop out before completing secondary school.

For example, the drop-out rates for Hispanics, Blacks, and other non-White groups and for low-income Whites are considerably higher than the average for other groups (Rumberger, 1983). About 14 percent of students who were sophomores in 1980

had dropped out of secondary school by the spring of their senior year in 1982 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:154). The rates for Blacks and Hispanics, however, were fully 50 percent higher than the rate for White (non-Hispanic) students. Even these data understate the true disparity since they do not account for dropouts prior to the spring of the sophomore year. Data suggest that about 40 percent of Hispanic dropouts leave before reaching tenth grade (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, 1984:10). The rate for Blacks is almost as high, and for students in large cities with high concentrations of minorities the rate is said to exceed 50 percent (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, 1984:23).

In what is generally regarded as the most sophisticated statistical analysis of the subject, Rumberger (1983) examined the influence of race, sex, and family background on dropping out. Using an extensive 1979 data survey of youths 14 to 21 years old who had dropped out before completing high school, he attempted to ascertain the determinants of drop-out behavior. The most important factors that predicted dropping out were the race and socioeconomic background of the students. Overall drop-out rates among females were 20 percent for Blacks, 31 percent for Hispanics, and 16 percent for non-Hispanic Whites; among males they were 26 percent for Blacks, 29 percent for Hispanics, and 19 percent for non-Hispanic Whites. Thus, racial differences were large, even when socioeconomic disadvantage was not accounted for.

However, the probability of dropping out rose considerably for all racial groups if the student came from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background. For disadvantaged females the drop-out rates were 29 percent for Blacks, 43 percent for Hispanics, and 37 percent for Whites; for males they were 23 percent for Blacks, 44 percent for Hispanics, and 39 percent for Whites. Although the proportion of Blacks who were disadvantaged was far higher than for Whites, among disadvantaged Whites the drop-out rates were higher than for disadvantaged Blacks.

Achievement scores of the disadvantaged are considerably lower than those of their more advantaged colleagues, even at school entry, and they fall farther behind as schooling progresses. As the Coleman Report found, racial differences are substantial, and socioeconomic variables are the most powerful predictors of test scores within race (Coleman *et al.*, 1966). These findings have been replicated in many subsequent studies (Bridge, Judd, and Moock, 1979). For example, when the mathematics test scores of a national sample of students who were 9, 13, and 17 years old were compared by race, White students had better performances at all age levels than Blacks and Hispanics; and the gap was greater at age 17 than at age 9 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:52). According to the College Board, among high school students who took the Scholastic Apitiude Tests for college admission in 1983-84, the average combined score for the verbal and quantitative exams among Blacks was about 217 points below that of nonminority Whites. Although the gap had closed from a 258-point difference in 1976, the 1983-84 difference still meant that with the White average at the fiftieth percentile, the average Black score was at only the seventeenth percentile ("Test Scores

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for Blacks Are Rising," *New York Times*, 1985).

Educationally disadvantaged students have been present in the schools since the origins of public schooling in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was not until the 1960s, however, that the schools began explicitly to recognize that such students had to be provided with tailored educational programs if they were to succeed. Up to that point the blame for educational failure of students was presumed to fall on the students and their families, with schools taking little or no responsibility. It was assumed that schools were available to all, and those who did not succeed educationally were limited in either their abilities or their efforts, or both. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that policymakers began to realize that even highly conscientious students with good abilities might have special educational needs if they came from educationally disadvantaged families. By the mid-1960s, state and federal governments had established compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged, and local educational agencies were attempting to adapt their instructional strategies to meet the needs of such students. As emphasized above, recent evidence suggests that these programs have succeeded in reducing modestly the test-score gap between minority and White students over time, but the gap remains substantial.

One of the shortcomings of past compensatory educational programs was that the resources were often inadequate to make much of a difference. For example, the largest federal program, Title I, typically represented appropriations equal to only about 3 percent of total elementary and secondary school expenditures in the United States. Even for children receiving the services, compensatory education resources were relatively nominal. Unfortunately, two recent trends suggest that the situation will deteriorate, even if current funding initiatives are maintained. These are the rapid growth of the educationally disadvantaged population, and the increasing degree of disadvantage.

Rapid Growth of the Educationally Disadvantaged

The disadvantaged student population is growing at a far more rapid rate than the rest of the population. Although not all minorities are disadvantaged, and many disadvantaged students are not members of ethnic or racial minority groups, the minority population is often used as a proxy for assessing the size of the disadvantaged group. From 1970 to 1980, U.S. public school enrollments from the preprimary level to twelfth grade declined from about 46 million to 41 million students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:16). During the same time period, minority enrollments rose from about 9.5 million to about 11 million, or from about 21 to 27 percent of the total. Minority enrollments have been increasing at a more rapid pace than the general population because of a considerably higher birth rate and immigration—both legal and illegal—that is unprecedented in recent decades. Both factors create rapid growth, particularly among school-age

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populations, since immigrant families tend to be young and have children.

At one extreme is California, where minority enrollments rose from about 27 percent of the total in 1970 to about 43 percent in 1980; and it is expected that minorities will become the dominant component of California's students before 1990. While the growth was not so rapid in Texas, the proportion of minority students there was about 46 percent in 1980, having risen from about 37 percent in 1970. During the same period, the minority population rose in Connecticut from 12 to 17 percent, in Florida from 28 to 32 percent, in Massachusetts from 6 to 11 percent, in New York from 25 to 32 percent, in Oregon from about 5 to 9 percent, and in South Carolina from 41 to 44 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:18). Florida, New York, and South Carolina are cases of high numbers of minority students with relatively low growth. In contrast, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Oregon have had relatively low proportions of minority students, but the growth rates have been very high.

The national and state data tend to understate the challenge for most of the major cities. In 1982, 71 percent of Miami's (Dade County) elementary and secondary students were minorities; in Philadelphia, 73 percent; New York City, 74 percent; Los Angeles, 78 percent; Baltimore, 80 percent; Chicago, 84 percent; and Detroit, 89 percent (McNett, 1983).

An additional reason for the growth of the disadvantaged population is the increase in the number of children in poverty families among all racial groups. The proportion of children in poverty stayed at about 16 percent between 1969 and 1979, but it rose precipitously to 22 percent from 1979 to 1983. This represents an increase in numbers of about 3.7 million in only four years, to a total of almost 14 million children. In 1983, some 45 percent of Black school-age children and some 36 percent of Hispanic school-age children lived in poverty. Although some of the increase was associated with a rising incidence of single-parent, female-headed households, most was due to a deterioration in the economy, in spite of the overall recovery in 1983 (Koretz and Ventresca, 1984).

Increasing Degree of Disadvantage

Not only are the educationally disadvantaged increasing in numbers, but the degree of disadvantage seems to be rising because of the extreme impoverishment of recent immigrants. Many of the new immigrants are arriving from the poorest countries in Asia and Latin America. While U.S.-born parents of disadvantaged children typically have at least some high school education because of the compulsory attendance laws here, immigrants from rural areas typically have less than a primary education. Of the largest single group of immigrants into California—Mexicans—only about 28 percent have more than an eighth-grade education (Muller, 1985:7). Further, the immigrants come from the most impoverished regions of their countries, areas in which the quality of schooling is notoriously low. This means that they often lack the educational background to help their children succeed in school.

Beyond this, a high proportion of the immigrants do not speak English, so English is not reinforced in the home. Since the English language is the currency of instruction in the United States, this places the immigrant children at a further disadvantage. According to the 1980 U.S. Census, about 17 percent of children 5-17 years old were considered to be members of minority-language populations. That is, they were living in households in which a language other than English was spoken (Waggoner, 1984). In New Mexico, California, and Arizona, over one-third of students derived from such backgrounds. But even Connecticut and Massachusetts respectively had 19 and 21 percent of their students in this category. Students characterized by parents with little education, low income, and a language other than English in the home are multiply disadvantaged from an educational perspective; and the makeup of current immigrations—both legal and illegal—will tend to reinforce this pattern.

Evidence that supports an increasing degree of disadvantage is provided by the fact that in the fall of 1972 about 46 percent of Hispanic high school graduates participated in postsecondary education immediately following graduation, but by the fall of 1980 that proportion had fallen to 40 percent, despite the widespread loosening of admissions standards during that period. While the participation rate of Hispanics from a middle socioeconomic background fell by about 10 percent, the rate for Hispanics of lower socioeconomic background fell by 22 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984:160). The decreasing participation in postsecondary education is especially surprising given that among Hispanics the high school drop-out rate rose over that period (McNett, 1983:16). This means that Hispanic high school graduates were becoming more educationally "select" over time and would normally have been expected to increase their rates of college attendance. This drastic change in participation over such a short period may have been occasioned by poorer academic preparation and thus lower eligibility for postsecondary education or less adequate financial resources, both factors associated with increasing disadvantage.

In summary, the evidence suggests that the proportion of disadvantaged students in American education is high and is increasing rapidly so that in some states such students will be in the majority. While there is no precise method of estimating the total number of disadvantaged in the United States, an estimate must include students in poverty and those whose chances of educational success are handicapped by virtue of linguistic and cultural obstacles.

If we assume that about three-quarters of minority students meet either the economic or the linguistic-cultural criterion, or both, that accounts for almost 8 million disadvantaged students in 1982. (About 40 percent of minority students met the poverty criterion alone in 1983, according to Koretz and Ventresca, 1984:2.) If we augment that total by the estimated 14 percent of nonminority students who live in poverty, another 4 million students are included, for a total of about 12 million disadvantaged out of about 40 million students in 1982. This suggests that disadvantaged students accounted for about 30 percent of

elementary and secondary students in 1982; and the proportion is increasing. Even this total does not include the high number of disadvantaged who have dropped out of school but are less than 18 years old. Further, the evidence suggests that the degree of educational disadvantage is probably rising as the disadvantaged population is augmented by poor immigrants.

Both of these factors suggest that the challenge to American education posed by disadvantaged students will rise precipitously at a time when even the present needs of educationally disadvantaged students have not been satisfactorily addressed. Accordingly, it is important to consider the consequences of ignoring these trends.

An Impending Crisis

When the disadvantaged population represented a relatively small proportion of school enrollments, the failure of the schools to educate this group was tragic for its members and contrary to the principles of an open and democratic society. Because its immediate effects were mainly confined to the disadvantaged population, the issues could be ignored by the more advantaged majority without consequence, in the absence of moral or altruistic concerns.

As the disadvantaged have increased in numbers and are projected to become a majority of the school population—and ultimately the overall population—the problem is no longer confined to that group. The potential consequences of inaction accrue to the larger society as well. These consequences include the emergence of a dual society with a large and poorly educated underclass, massive disruption in higher education, reduced economic competitiveness of the nation as well as of individual states and industries that are most heavily impacted by these populations, and higher costs of public services associated with impoverishment and crime.

A Dual Society

As the disadvantaged population increases without appropriate educational interventions to improve its situation substantially, it is likely to form the underclass of a dual society. Composed of racial and ethnic minorities and persons from economically disadvantaged origins, its members will face high unemployment rates, low earnings, and menial occupations. All the while the potential political power of the group will be increasing with its rise in numbers. The upper tier of society will be composed mainly of prosperous non-Hispanic Whites who will be more highly educated and will enjoy high employment rates and good occupations.

The prospects for the future for the lower tier are suggested by the present fortunes of those groups with heavy concentrations of educationally disadvantaged. The unemployment rates for non-Whites in recent years have been more than double the rate for Whites, with the rate for Blacks 16-19 years of age being in the 40-50 percent range (*Monthly Labor Review* 1984:70). The median income of non-Whites is considerably below that of Whites (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983b: Tables 4, 13, and 19). The expected lifetime earnings of high school dropouts are about one-third less than those of high school graduates and half those of college graduates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983a).

The specter of a dual society suggests great political conflict and potential social upheaval. In several states the disadvantaged will clearly constitute a majority of the population and a potential majority of voters as youths reach adulthood. In the democratic tradition, they will support social movements that improve their situation (Carnoy and Levin, 1985). At the same time, society's earlier educational neglect may create a largely uninformed electorate, incapable of fully understanding the important technical, social, and economic issues that are at stake. Economic and educational inequality in conjunction with equal political rights suggest future polarization and intense conflict.

Higher Education

The implications for higher education are also severe. Even with high drop-out rates, an increasing proportion of high school graduates will derive from disadvantaged backgrounds. Without earlier educational interventions, these students will leave high school with serious learning deficits which will prevent many of them from benefiting from current levels of instruction in colleges and universities.

To the degree that high school graduation entitles the disadvantaged to pursue postsecondary study, as in community colleges and many state universities, there are two possibilities. The first is that increasing numbers of the disadvantaged will gain college entry but a large proportion of them will experience academic failure and leave without a degree. Among the group that entered college in 1972, only 13 percent of the Hispanics but 34 percent of the Anglos completed a bachelor's degree by 1976 (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, Vol. I, 1984:24). The second possibility is that the colleges and universities will have to undertake massive remedial functions to assist the disadvantaged to reach levels where they can benefit from conventional instruction. According to a recent survey of the U.S. Department of Education, one in every four freshmen is already enrolled in a remedial math course and one in every six in remedial reading (U.S. Department of Education, 1985).

Both of these outcomes are costly to students and institutions. Large numbers of failures mean wasted time for students and wasted resources for colleges, not to mention the psychological costs to students of not being able to "make it." Substantial remedial activities will require additional faculty, and student programs will take longer, with a greater cost in tuition and lost earnings during the longer training that will be required. Also, as a college or university takes on remedial functions, it is likely to approve some of these courses for degree credit with the effect of watering down the overall curriculum and level of standards as well as diluting the overall quality of its educational programs.

Alternatively, there will be pressures both inside and outside higher education to preserve the character of existing institutions by resisting accommodation to the rising population of minorities and other educationally disadvantaged students. This would probably take the form of requiring college entrance examinations—where they have not been required in the past—for admission to public institutions of higher education, as well as raising academic coursework requirements for admission, as many of the states are presently doing (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). These changes would have a powerful effect on reducing the numbers of educationally disadvantaged qualifying for admission, given their lower test scores. Even in 1983, 15.5 percent of California's 1983 high school graduates who were White (non-Hispanic) were eligible for admission to the University of California in contrast with less than 4 percent of Black and less than 5 percent of Hispanic graduates (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985:12). Raising standards would further exacerbate these disproportions, creating an elite system of higher education, a result that flies in the face of the democratic mission

conferred upon public systems of higher education supported by tax revenues collected from the entire population. (Even the poor and the unemployed must pay property and sales taxes.) Higher education would become extremely unrepresentative of the broader population at the same time the group that was disproportionately underrepresented would be increasing its numbers and political power at the state and federal levels. Clearly, such a policy will lead to political turmoil both on and off the campuses.

Either the reduction of standards in higher education or the movement to greater selectivity will be costly and politically contentious. The reduction of the quality of higher education through dilution of standards to accommodate the disadvantaged will also compromise the quality of college education even for the nondisadvantaged members of the future labor force who are college educated. Thus, the consequences of ignoring the present plight of the disadvantaged have particularly painful consequences for higher education.

Deterioration of the Labor Force

A further consequence of the present treatment of the educationally disadvantaged will be a serious deterioration in the quality of the labor force. As long as the disadvantaged were just a small minority of the population, they could be absorbed by low-skill jobs or relegated to the status of unemployment without direct consequences for the economy. High drop-out rates, low test scores, and poor academic performance of a group that will become a larger and larger portion of the school population mean that a larger portion of the future labor force will be undereducated for available jobs. Here we refer not only to managerial, professional, and technical jobs but to even lower-level service and assembly work. Clerical workers, cashiers, and salespeople all need basic skills in oral and written communications (National Academy of Sciences, 1984), the acquisition of which is hardly guaranteed in the schooling of the disadvantaged. A U.S. government study in 1976 found that while 13 percent of all 17-year-olds were classified as functionally illiterate, the percentages of illiterates among Hispanics and Blacks were 56 and 44 respectively (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1976).

As the disadvantaged become an increasing and even dominant share of the labor force, their inadequate educational preparation will be visited on the competitive positions of the industries and states in which they work and on our national economic status. Employers will suffer in terms of lagging productivity, higher training costs, and competitive disadvantages that will result in lost sales and profits. This problem will be especially severe for those states with the largest growth in the disadvantaged population, such as California, where minorities will become the majority of students by 1990. It will also be most serious in those industries that will be dependent upon this population for their labor needs. As a result, the state and federal governments will suffer a declining tax base and a concomitant loss of tax revenues which could be used to fund improvements in education and other services.

Rising Public Costs and Falling Tax Revenues

A final consequence of failing to address the challenge of the educationally disadvantaged will be rising costs for public services as more and more citizens must rely upon public assistance and as undereducated teens and adults pursue illegal activities to fill idle time and obtain the income that is unobtainable in legal activities. Many of the disadvantaged will continue to have difficulty finding regular jobs as adults, so their families will need to depend upon the availability of public assistance to survive. When one applies a teenage unemployment rate of 40-50 percent to a larger and larger group of school dropouts, there are likely to be increasing numbers of undereducated youngsters taking their activities to the streets rather than to the workplace. This development not only will make the United States a less desirable place to live but will increase the costs of police services and the criminal justice system.

At the same time, the potential decline in economic activity created by an underprepared workforce will erode tax revenues. This situation will place additional pressures on the middle class to pay higher taxes for welfare and the system of criminal justice at the same time that the economy is flagging. Accordingly, another dilemma and source of political conflict may be in the offing as taxpayers resist raising taxes under the troublesome economic conditions and mounting pressures for higher expenditures.

In summary, unless the nation responds to the imminent crisis of the educationally disadvantaged, a number of deleterious consequences seem inevitable. These include a two-tiered society composed ultimately of a majority of poorly educated and economically deprived non-Whites, immigrants, and impoverished Whites, and a more highly educated and prosperous minority sector that is composed primarily of non-Hispanic Whites. This situation will lead to serious political conflict and potential social disruption. It will create a costly challenge for higher education and long-term deterioration in the quality of the labor force and the competitive position of the nation and those states and industries most impacted by a disadvantaged workforce. Finally, it will escalate the costs of public assistance and criminal justice, while the ability to finance such services will be undermined by a deterioration in the economic situation.

Although these consequences seem to be reasonable projections of the present situation, they can be averted through judicious public policy. Obviously, major attention must be focused on improving the education of the disadvantaged to avoid these developments and on assessing the degree to which recent educational reforms promise to address their needs effectively.

Recent Reforms and the Disadvantaged

The year 1983 heralded a crusade for massive educational reform in America. Although some two dozen reports were issued by different commissions and study groups, only a portion of these were considered both comprehensive and national in scope. The most widely cited is *A Nation At Risk*, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education. It is not the purpose of this paper to review the reports individually but to point out their principal implications for the education of the disadvantaged. Good synopses of the individual reports are found in Griesemer and Butler (1983).

The recent calls for educational reform are not a response to the plight of disadvantaged students. Rather, they seem to be premised on the concern that, in the absence of major changes in American education, the U.S. economy may lose the competitive race for international markets in an age of high technology (Levin and Rumberger, 1983). This focus is especially explicit in *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and the reports of the Education Commission of the States (1983), the Committee for Economic Development (1985), and the National Science Board (1983); but it is also central to many of the other national reports. Still other reports focus on high school reforms (Boyer, 1983; Sizer, 1984), and at least one makes a plea for a common education along the lines of promoting our Western heritage (Adler, 1982). Two relatively recent reports have begun to raise the question of education for the disadvantaged (Brown and Haycock, 1984; National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985). However, it is clearly the calls for upgrading the quality of education to meet the international challenge that seem to have primacy in the national debates and toward which states have been responding rather than any specific concern about the educationally disadvantaged (U.S. Department of Education, 1984).

The most prominent of the recommendations for reform seek specific changes that would strengthen curriculum and standards at the secondary level. These include implementing meaningful competency standards for graduation and a greater number of required courses in the sciences, mathematics, English, and foreign languages.

Among the more general recommendations for all levels of schooling are an increase in the length of the school day and school year, the upgrading of textbooks and instructional materials to make them more demanding, higher salaries and the use of merit pay and career ladders for teachers, and better teacher licensing, hiring, and retention standards.

For a number of reasons these requirements are only marginally relevant to disadvantaged populations, and some of them may actually be harmful by creating additional barriers to high school completion without providing the resources and assistance for the disadvantaged to meet the new standards.

The states have responded to the reform agenda by legislating some of the recommendations, discussing others, directing the attention of local education authorities to still others, and ignoring the remainder. Even where the reforms have been converted into legislation, critics have found that the recommendations and legislation often take a rigid mechanical approach which is unlikely to have the desired

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results (Cross, 1984) or provide only a large number of questionable and idiosyncratic responses rather than a comprehensive solution to the issues (Cuban, 1984).

One of the first states to pass legislation in response to the reform agenda was California. Among the features of its Senate Bill 813 is a mandate for new high school graduation requirements which will become effective in June 1987. These include three years each of English and social studies, two years each of mathematics and science, one year of foreign language or fine arts, and two years of physical education. The State Department of Education recommended to local districts even higher minimum requirements consisting of four years of English, three of mathematics and social studies, two of science and foreign language, one of visual and performing arts, and one-half year of computer studies. California also legislated an increase in the minimum school year, and incentives were provided for increasing daily and annual instructional time. Additionally, provisions were made for upgrading textbooks, promoting specialized high schools, expanding statewide testing, improving school discipline, raising teacher salaries, formulating more rigorous procedures for teacher certification, establishing a system of mentor teachers, streamlining dismissal of unsatisfactory teachers, and establishing provisions for enhancing professional development for teachers and administrators (U.S. Department of Education, 1984:30-33).

The states of Connecticut and Massachusetts have been considering similar changes, while Oregon has been focusing on curriculum reform, graduation requirements, college admission standards, and teacher certification (U.S. Department of Education, 1984:36-38, 72-74, 108-110). The absence of concern for the plight of the educationally disadvantaged in the discussions of educational reform in Massachusetts has prompted the preparation of an outstanding report on needs of the disadvantaged in that state (Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1984).

South Carolina has been a major exception to the overall trend, passing legislation in the spring of 1984 that makes explicit provisions for the disadvantaged. In its comprehensive reform package, South Carolina included raising graduation requirements, requiring student proficiencies in basic skills for receipt of a diploma, and most of the other features of the California legislation. In addition, it stipulated that special instruction in basic skills must be provided to every student who does not meet the state's standards (U.S. Department of Education, 1984:115-118). The state has begun to set out intensive compensatory education programs for students in the bottom fourth on state reading and mathematics tests and less intensive programs for students who score above the bottom fourth but who still fall below state norms. Special attention is also targeted for seventh-graders because of the crucial role of the middle school in the educational process. The new law also requires that all 5-year-olds attend kindergarten in order to help disadvantaged children catch up before reaching the primary grades ("Get-Tough Policies Lead to Compensatory Education Changes," 1985).

South Carolina is largely unique in its direct consideration of the educationally disadvantaaged as part of its educational reform approach. In Texas,

for example, while an official committee charged with drafting recommendations for educational reform has proposed a comprehensive program in which "the State should require school districts to provide tutorial service, at the school, to a student failing a single unit of any subject at any time during the school year" (Select Committee on Public Education, State of Texas, 1984) and the plan was adopted by the legislature, the provisions for the disadvantaged have not yet been implemented. Unfortunately, most of the states have made little or no specific provision for the educationally disadvantaged other than hoping that rising standards will elevate the learning of all students.

Reforms as Obstacles to the Disadvantaged

Thus far it has been suggested that the thrust of educational reforms has been aimed at the secondary level, and particularly at promoting the technical competencies of secondary school graduates for keeping the United States competitive with Western Europe, Japan, and other nations. With few exceptions the reforms have not addressed the plight of the educationally disadvantaged. Of course, if improvements in teacher salaries or professional training improve the overall quality of teaching, there will be some beneficial effect for all students. But that is a slow process and not an effective substitute for reform targeted to achieve specific educational goals for the disadvantaged. Worse yet, in the absence of explicit efforts to improve learning among the disadvantaged, some of the general reforms may actually create new obstacles to improving their situation (Toch, 1984). Most notably, the setting of competency standards for a diploma, raising course requirements for graduation, and increasing the amount of time spent in school may all have the effect of increasing drop-out rates among the most drop-out prone populations (Glazer, 1984).

Examine, for example, the setting of state competency standards for receiving a diploma. On the surface this is a very attractive reform, because it assures that all holders of a diploma will have certain proficiencies. But if disadvantaged students enter secondary school with a two- or three-year handicap in achievement scores relative to their more advantaged counterparts, it is likely that few of them will suddenly catch up to meet meaningful competency standards at graduation. More likely, even if they try very hard they will not meet the stringent standards and will not receive a diploma for their efforts. The additional standards may simply discourage them from trying and from remaining in school.

There are two ways to solve this dilemma. If competencies are set at a very low level for graduation, such as at eighth-grade achievement, they will be relatively easy to satisfy even for many of the disadvantaged. In the past, most of the states chose low competency standards. An alternative is to choose higher standards and provide the educational resources and programs for disadvantaged students that will enable them to meet the higher standards.

Many of the new standards are likely to be higher than previous ones, and there is the expectation that this

will lead to remediation for the disadvantaged. But without the resources and mandated commitment to meeting the needs of the disadvantaged, this is unlikely to happen. Philadelphia is a case in point in facing remedial needs that it has not been able to fund (Toch, 1984). More recently, the State of Pennsylvania has just reported the first round of results under its statewide tests. Although 60 percent of Philadelphia's students failed to meet the norm, the state's financial assistance for remediation falls far short of what will be required. Unfortunately, the mere existence of test-score data revealing the poor achievement of the disadvantaged has never set in motion the resources and programs to address their condition. Explicit provisions for doing so must be a part of any increased standards.

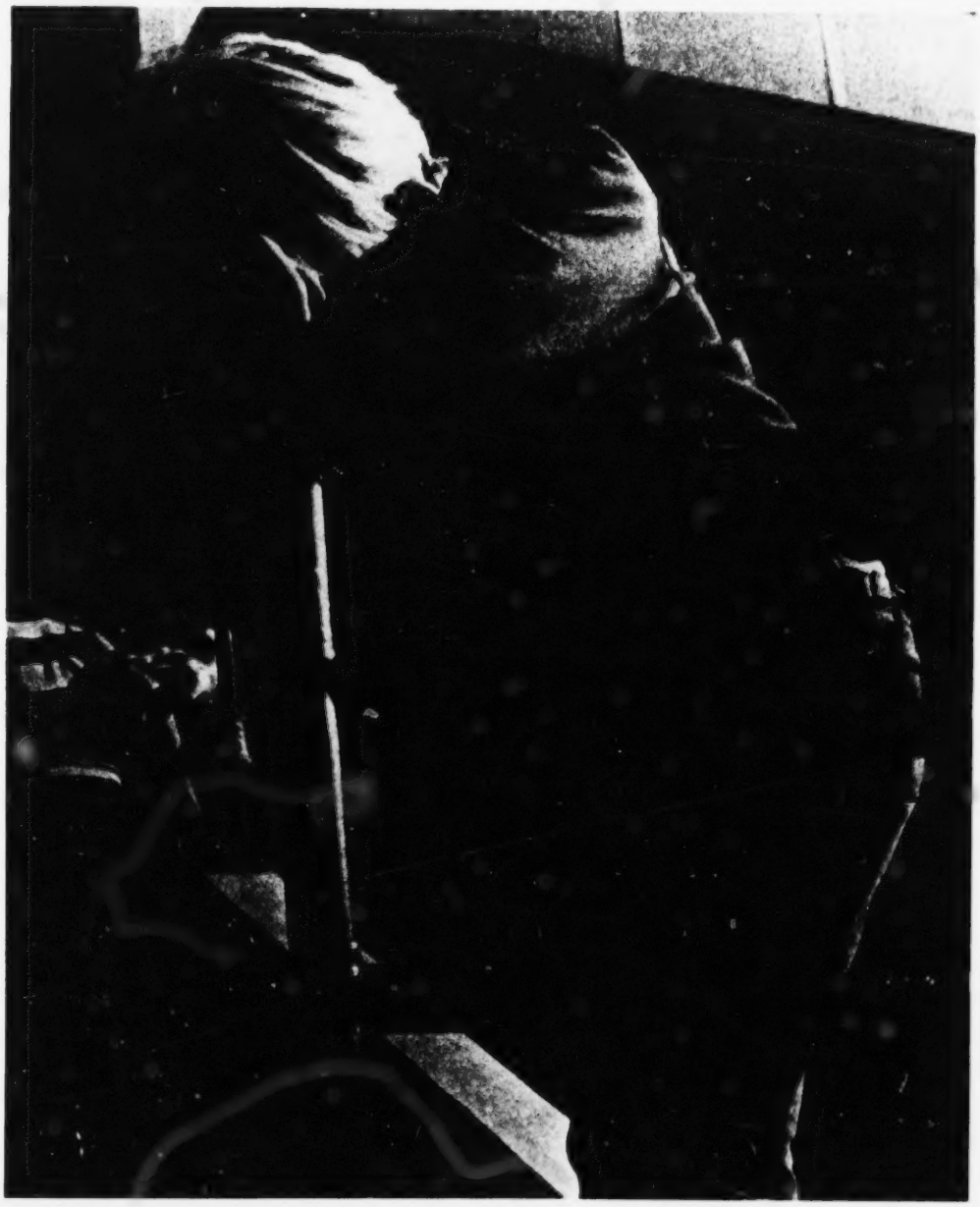
In the absence of such programs, the attempt to raise standards so that they will be more meaningful from educational and job-related perspectives will increase the pressures on the disadvantaged to drop out, even for those students who could meet the standards through approriate educational assistance. Their failure to meet the standards and obtain a competency-based diploma may increase their rejection by employers, even when they are able to perform the job (Levin, 1978). Without a major attack on the educational problems of the disadvantaged in the earliest grades, the raising of competency standards will discourage these students from completing school. This is true even when the standards are used at earlier grades for determining promotion. Without major funding and programs to alleviate earlier deficiencies, too many of the disadvantaged will be required to repeat grades at great cost to the schools. Clearly, it would be more efficient to put those resources into remediating achievement deficiencies at each grade level than using grade repetition as a device to meet standards.

The same effect is likely to result from the increases in course requirements for graduation. When disadvantaged students who enter ninth grade are performing at the sixth-grade level, additional course requirements in mathematics, English, and science are not likely to be effective in raising performance levels for *them*. As difficult as it is for them to benefit from high-school-level instruction under the present regimen, the additional requirements will mean that it will be even more difficult. The point is that students who are far behind reasonable norms need to be brought up to those norms before they can benefit from existing high school requirements, without even considering additional requirements.

Increasing the length of the school day or school year is also likely to have discouraging effects for the disadvantaged. First, the general evidence that more instructional time will improve learning outcomes is meager at best, but there is virtually no evidence that the present school day or school year is the limiting factor affecting the learning of disadvantaged students (Levin, 1984). For many of these students, the fact that they are doing poorly and see no hope of catching up reinforces their feeling that school is an oppressive environment. To require them to spend more time in such an environment without altering educational strategies to make their learning experience more successful is likely to produce greater disaffection. That is, it is imperative

that the learning situation become more vital and exciting, and that the students have some sense of progress rather than a feeling of failure and futility. Without these changes, forcing the disadvantaged to spend more time in school is unlikely in itself to increase their achievement. To the contrary, it provides an additional pressure for dropping out.

In summary, most of the educational reforms that are being sponsored by the states do not specifically address the critical needs of educationally disadvantaged students. Also, those that push for more time in school or higher standards without salient changes in the schooling process that will improve schooling experiences and learning for the disadvantaged will likely increase drop-out rates among the students who can scarcely hope to meet present standards, a point buttressed by available research (McDill, Natriello, and Pallas, 1985). It is clear that whatever the merits of present reforms, they are incomplete and portend both a present and a future disaster unless the needs of the disadvantaged are addressed.



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Addressing the Needs of the Disadvantaged

The unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature, such as increasing course requirements, raising teacher salaries, or increasing the amount of instructional time. While these reforms may be desirable on their own merits, they should not be viewed as a substitute for direct and comprehensive strategies to solve the problems of the disadvantaged. In the absence of specific remedial programs for the disadvantaged, the general reforms may overwhelm the abilities of ever larger numbers of them to meet the requirements for high school completion.

First, disadvantaged students arrive at school with learning deficits in the areas that the schools stress, such as vocabulary, language, and reading readiness. Second, learning resources in their homes are inadequate to support the educational programs of the schools and to sustain normal educational progress during the schooling period. Third, most schools lack the programs and resources to make *major* inroads into the problem. Finally, an increasing proportion of the disadvantaged population is coming from homes in which English or standard English is not the principal language spoken.

A successful onslaught to the problems of disadvantaged students will require a coordinated and comprehensive approach, great sensitivity to the requirements for effective local implementation, and appropriation of adequate resources. The major components of such a strategy are (1) providing enriched preschool experiences, (2) improving the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment, (3) improving the effectiveness of the school for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged, and (4) assisting those from linguistically different backgrounds to acquire skills in standard English. Elements of all these major components have existed for some time, but they have rarely been combined in a comprehensive attack on the problems within the framework of an overriding imperative. Many have been implemented in only the most mechanical fashion, and funding has often been inadequate.

Enriching Preschool Experience

The first part of any strategy to improve the situation of the educationally disadvantaged must be to address preschool needs. Needs at this stage include nutrition and shelter as well as educational development. Preschool enrichment can take place in the home through providing parents with the knowledge and resources to help their own children. Programs that help parents to provide learning assistance and that provide them with appropriate materials for doing so create an ongoing resource for their children over both the preschool and schooling years (Lombard, 1981). Further, empowering parents to assist their children is important for creating supportive attitudes among parents and children about the central place of education and school performance in their lives.

Preschool enrichment should also draw upon the possibilities of improving the educational content of day care centers and preschools. Certainly, Head Start is an important component of this

strategy, but it should also extend to other influences on the lives of children, such as the media. Especially important is the greater use of television as an educationally supportive tool. This might be done through placing greater pressure on commercial television networks to provide programming of a higher educational quality for both preschool and school-age children (Leifer, Gordon, and Graves, 1974); and it can be reinforced by more attention to state and federal support for programs that prepare disadvantaged families for school. That is, such programs can assist both parents and children to participate in the learning experience. *Sesame Street* has shown the great potential of this approach.

Of specific importance is the use of television programming for providing standard English language skills to preschool youngsters. An excellent example of a program that partially served this function was *Villa Alegre*, a show that was designed to impart bilingual skills to both Spanish- and English-speaking youngsters. Unfortunately, inadequate funding led to its early demise after relatively few segments were produced and aired. However, it did demonstrate the capabilities of television for performing such a role.

In summary, a preschool strategy should be pervasive in taking advantage of all possible learning opportunities in the early years, including the home, day care centers, preschools, and the media.

Augmenting Home Resources

In order to provide supportive home environments for learning, it is necessary to augment home resources. This can be accomplished through programs of parent education and parent involvement as well as provision of appropriate instructional materials to assist parents and students in the home. For example, the provision of concise encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reading material is important. With some home computers in the $100-$200 range, it might be possible to provide grants for or loans of such computers and a lending library of educational software that will offer instruction in basic skills in an enjoyable form. (The Houston Independent School District has already established such a program.) Students also need to be provided with after-school programs that combine study and recreation, and they need to be taught good study habits to assist them in the home.

The community should also be drawn upon to provide these resources. For example, churches, libraries, and recreation centers are often centrally located and can form an integral part of the educational life of the community. They can provide study space and volunteer programs for assisting students in their studies. In addition, community agencies such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and

YWCA have shown interest in collaborating with schools to improve learning (National Collaboration for Youth, 1984).

Working with parents to improve the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment is probably the most overlooked domain among all the routes for enhancing the education of the disadvantaged. Both schools and community agencies should develop programs in which they work jointly with parents to provide educational offerings for students with learning deficiencies. The governing mechanisms for such programs should seek full parental involvement and interest to benefit from parents' insights in turn.

Augmenting School Resources

Compensatory education programs are not new to schools, but they are neither as extensive nor as imaginative as they might be in addressing the needs of the disadvantaged. The most important dimension in designing programs is the diagnosis of specific needs. Obviously, heavy emphasis must be placed upon improving learning in basic skills in an environment that is not oppressive. School must be viewed not as a hostile but as a desirable place to be. It is unlikely that this can be accomplished easily without the cooperation of parents and other members of the community. The more parents can be involved in school decisions at the level of the school, classroom, or their children, the more likely they will have a supportive attitude that will reinforce the efforts of the school (Levin, 1970).

Children with health problems or nutritional deficiencies are unlikely to have sufficient energy or motivation to learn. Accordingly, a high priority should be placed on meeting such needs through medical and dental screening and treatment and through school breakfast and lunch programs.

Given that these fundamental needs are met, the main focus should be on assisting students in the elementary years to be prepared for the normal pace and level of a high quality of instruction at the secondary level. In order to accommodate this objective, goals should be set and attained at each grade level that will progressively bring disadvantaged students up to proficiency in the major subjects by the time they complete the sixth grade. One major framework for achieving such a goal is that of mastery learning (Bloom, 1976).

The goal of mastery learning is to assure that virtually all children meet objectives that are appropriate for specific courses or subject areas. Goals are set for achieving mastery as reflected by performance of the student in meeting particular standards or criteria. For each unit of a course, a criterion is set that each student must meet. For example, it might be achieving a certain portion of correct answers on a spelling test or problem-solving exercises; or it might be writing a paragraph on a particular theme that demonstrates the development of an idea and the correct use of grammar. Instructional approaches are provided to minimize the amount of time it takes each child to achieve mastery. This approach is not only important in that it sets out a strategy for addressing the educational needs of all children, including the disadvantaged, within a framework that

emphasizes concrete standards; it also attempts to assure that students are ready for subsequent levels of instruction. Since there is greater efficiency in providing instruction to students at relatively similar levels, later instructional strategies can be more effective.

Specific strategies used under the mastery learning approach depend upon the distribution of initial student proficiencies, available resources, and the types of approaches that are likely to be effective among different types of students. They can include combinations of large-group instruction, small-group remediation, individual tutorials, independent study, and computer-assisted instruction, depending on resources and needs. However, the overriding criterion for deploying resources and strategies is to assure that all children meet the appropriate mastery levels for units, courses, and grade levels.

Two approaches that seem to work particularly well for disadvantaged students are peer teaching and cooperative learning.

Peer teaching refers to using students to tutor other students (Allen, 1976; Ehly and Larsen, 1980). There are many variations on how this might be done, including same-age and cross-age tutoring. Same-age tutoring generally refers to using higher-achieving students at the same grade level to teach lower-achieving students. Cross-age tutoring refers to using older students to tutor younger ones. The advantage of the latter version is that even low-achieving students in higher grades can be used to tutor low-achieving students in lower grades in skills that the former have already mastered. Under this arrangement a tutor will also make gains in the subject that is being tutored, so the process improves the performance of two students (Glass, 1984). Finally, there is a great advantage in getting large numbers of students involved in providing as well as receiving instruction because it draws upon an underutilized resource and makes students aware of how they can contribute to the instructional process. By raising their self-efficacy in the school setting, it may also provide a greater commitment to the schooling process.

As with all instructional approaches, adequate planning, coordination, and evaluation are necessary to produce a good tutoring program, and adequate time must be permitted for proper implementation before the best results will be obtained (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; Kirst and Meister, 1985). In the case of tutoring, it is necessary to select and train tutors properly and to monitor their progress. A good tutoring program requires adult specialists, instructional materials, and facilities. The cost of one such program in 1980 was about $212 per student per year for each subject, or about 8 percent of the average per-pupil expenditure in that year, to obtain an achievement gain of almost one additional year in mathematics and about a half-year in reading beyond that of students who did not receive tutoring (Levin and Meister, 1984). Further, tutoring has been found to be about four times more cost effective for increasing mathematics and reading scores of disadvantaged youngsters at the elementary level as have reductions in class size or increases in the length of the school day (Levin, Glass, and Meister, 1984).

Cooperative learning refers to approaches that enlist the mutual support of students in assisting each other to learn. By drawing on the knowledge,

resources, and enthusiasm of all members of the group, solidarity and *esprit de corps* are established as well as a network of social support. Traditional instructional strategies tend to focus on the individual student working largely in isolation from other students, with no provision or incentives for students to assist each other, share information, or take pride in the learning growth of their colleagues. By changing the organizational structure and incentives of the classroom, it is possible to draw upon a new source of knowledge, assistance, and encouragement. Disadvantaged students tend to benefit from such social support in which the group reinforces individual learning and sets a high value on the achievement of all its members.

As an illustration, Cohen and De Avila (1983) developed a cooperative approach that helped minority students at the elementary level improve their mathematics and science skills, an approach that yielded large achievement gains. The program was based upon organizing students into teams that were taught how to work together and solve problems as a team. There are many approaches to cooperative learning that can be adapted to both advantaged and disadvantaged children (Peterson, Wilkinson, and Hallinan, 1984; Slavin, 1983).

Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) may be an effective strategy for practicing basic skills and for learning other subjects. Results from careful evaluations suggest that it is possible for disadvantaged students at the elementary level to increase reading achievement by about a quarter of a year beyond what would be accomplished in regular instruction by taking 10-minute daily sessions in "drill and practice" during the school year (Levin and Meister, 1984). Gains in mathematics are about half of this amount. These results appear to be attainable at a cost of only about $120 per student per year for each subject, a small fraction of the $3000 average that is presently allocated to each student in the nation. In addition, there is a large amount of computer software and inexpensive computers (in the $100 range) designed for home entertainment and education that might be harnessed by school districts to assist disadvantaged students in their homes.

One alternative for giving disadvantaged students extra assistance is the use of summer sessions for such purposes. In order to avoid the problem of student burnout by providing too much schooling in what is often an inhospitable environment, an effort could be made to make summer school qualitatively different. Each day could combine field trips, movies, or other special events with learning sessions. In this way, youngsters would be motivated to attend summer school, even if some of the more enjoyable parts were interspersed with formal instruction. At the same time, much of the instruction could be made more relaxing through tutorial and group sessions staffed by parents and college students and supervised by professional educators. The use of such volunteers would also keep costs down.

Although we have stressed early attention to the needs of disadvantaged students so that they are prepared adequately for secondary school, supportive programs will be needed at the secondary level as well. In addition to the approaches set out above, it is important to consider the relation between school and work and the possibility

that some students will need alternative learning environments (Education Commission of the States, 1985). For many students the incentive to do well in school will be tied to the hope of getting a good job. This link can be reinforced through cooperative education and useful vocational training.

Cooperative education refers to students undertaking a part-time job in conjunction with school. The hours of school and work are arranged flexibly so that the students can meet both sets of obligations. At the same time, the financial rewards help to deter the students from leaving school because of economic pressures.

Vocational training was once the standard route for disadvantaged youth at the secondary level. When skilled jobs were more abundant and vocational schools could provide training for such jobs, the link between training and future jobs was obvious. Unfortunately, the types of skilled jobs for which vocational training at the secondary level is appropriate have declined considerably in place of a vast expansion in unskilled entry-level positions. While some vocational training may be useful for the vast numbers of clerical, sales, and health-sector positions that are available, students will still need academic types of skills to meet the standards for promotion and job mobility (National Academy of Sciences, 1984). Accordingly, the use of vocational training to keep the disadvantaged in school should not be seen as a substitute for providing them with strong basic skills that will enable them to benefit from training and retraining for future jobs. The Manpower Development Research Corporation in New York and Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia represent important resources for developing programs to increase the employment and employability of disadvantaged youths (Manpower Development Research Corporation, 1983; Public/Private Ventures, 1984).

Finally, some consideration should be given to providing alternative learning environments for disadvantaged youths who do not seem to benefit from conventional schools. Alternative schools might provide teachers who are particularly concerned with the educational needs of the disadvantaged, as well as more flexible offerings such as those that take youths into the community for learning (Boyer, 1983). Clearly, cooperative education can be an important alternative. However, it is important to note that, in the past, such schools were designed primarily as alternatives for middle-class youths or as "holding" operations for more difficult students until they reached the age at which they could drop out. An alternative school, rather than being a school for failures, should be a positive learning experience which builds on the particular learning styles of its students.

Assisting Students with Limited English Proficiency

As one of the major educational reform reports stressed, students who do not become proficient in the primary language of the society in which they live will face enormous obstacles both within and outside of school (Boyer, 1983). Among the largest linguistic group—the Hispanics—it appears

that there is a prime commitment to "solid English instruction" (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, Vol. I, 1984:38). With almost one-fifth of the nation's students drawn from minority-language populations and with the proportion increasing through immigration and the higher birth rates of these groups, the focus on language needs of students must be central. This means that schools must diagnose student language proficiencies at the outset and provide appropriate programs to assist students of limited English proficiency to acquire standard language skills. These skills are the kind required to read, write, and converse in such a way that the students will be able to express themselves and understand written material and conversation in pertinent employment, civic, and educational situations. The effort must attempt to achieve such goals in as short a period of time as possible in order to enable students to undertake instruction in classes that assume English proficiency.

Approaches to the teaching of English must necessarily vary according to the culture of the child. Heath (1983) has suggested a number of effective teaching strategies to account for variations in language acquisition, based upon her work with different cultural groups. What is needed is a strong commitment to providing appropriate and effective instruction in English to linguistic-minority children to provide them with facility in English as early as possible in their school careers. The method of doing that must necessarily depend on student learning styles and school resources. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education in Rosslyn, Virginia, can provide information on alternatives.

In summary, there are a number of promising approaches that can be used to address the educational deficiencies of disadvantaged populations. Rather than assume that the general educational reforms will automatically address the educational needs of all groups, we must formulate approaches to focus directly on the disadvantaged. While such general reforms as improving teacher selection, raising teacher salaries, and increasing performance standards for students may be meritorious, they may have little direct impact on the educational fortunes of the disadvantaged without other types of changes. In addition to the specific reforms to assist the disadvantaged that were outlined above, there are many other effective methods that have been discovered in individual school districts and states. State coordinators of compensatory education represent an unusually rich repository of information on effective practices for particular types of disadvantaged students. A major remaining issue is how the education of the disadvantaged can become a crucial priority on the policy agenda, given the predictable consequences of continuing to overlook the problem, as is so prevalent today.

An Educational Priority

The previous section emphasized the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and some ways of addressing them. However, these approaches must be viewed in the context of an overall strategy for placing the challenge of the disadvantaged on the policy agenda and addressing the challenge effectively. The agenda must include the establishment of goals, accountability, resources, and technical assistance. All levels of government and all other constituencies must assume some responsibility for pursuing the agenda as an investment in the future.

Goals

Goals for alleviating educational disadvantage must be concrete. Just as higher standards are set for the schools, there must be specific goals set for bringing disadvantaged students up to the required norms. This should be done at the initial stages of schooling so that by the time a student enters secondary school he or she is able to benefit from regular instruction. The establishment of goals has two purposes: first, to make a political statement that signals priority; second, to set a standard that can be used to assess progress. Specific achievement goals for disadvantaged students should be set at both state and local levels in the form of measurable standards of achievement.

Accountability

A system of accountability requires both information as well as sanctions. All jurisdictions should have information on the number and composition of the disadvantaged and their educational performance at school entry and at subsequent grade levels. Data should also be provided publicly on how student achievement at each stage compares with the goals set for that level, and parents should be provided with a clear understanding of their children's status and progress. Emphasis should be placed at the level of the individual school and school principal for meeting the goals that are set out. When schools consistently fail to make sufficient progress or individual teachers fail to make progress, sanctions are warranted such as replacement or terminaton while conforming to standards of due process (Bridges, 1984). In those cases where schools or school districts consistently fail to make adequate progress, the state may wish to bring in a trouble-shooting team that can pinpoint the problems and recommend appropriate actions to educators, citizens, and school boards.

Resources

Addressing the needs of disadvantaged students cannot be done without adequate resources. Although some interventions will have little cost attached to them, such as the use of more appropriate curricula or more flexible school policies, others will have a modest cost and still others a major one. For example, it was suggested that major achievement gains could be made for as little as $120 per student per year in such subjects as mathematics and reading through computer-assisted instruc-

tion. Even larger gains are possible through good peer tutoring programs that cost somewhat over $200 a year. But other instructional remedies may require considerable increases in personnel or services. For example, the extensive use of adult remedial specialists for small groups of students for all subjects is likely to be far more expensive, as is the extensive use of computer-assisted instruction for all subjects. Experience will provide a better picture of the necessary costs as different approaches are evaluated for both their cost and their effectiveness (Levin, 1983).

What should be kept in mind is that many of the necessary resources can be made available by redeploying those being used at the present time. For example, the same funds that are used to pay for students to repeat grades when they do not meet academic standards might be better spent in remediation programs that enable students to meet the requirements for promotion. Likewise, funds are presently spent for juvenile offenders that might be better spent on education so that more youths forego juvenile crime. According to the California Youth Authority, in 1983 alone it cost almost $28,000 to house a juvenile offender in a youth penal institution, some nine times the average annual expenditure per student in California's public schools. As will be emphasized, by improving the educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, the costs of other public services such as public assistance and the criminal justice system will decline.

Technical Assistance

A long history of neglect of the disadvantaged or attending to their needs only as a low priority has meant that not all schools or educational professionals know how to provide effective services. Accordingly, it is necessary that such services be readily accessible to states, school districts, schools, and individual teachers.

Responsibilities

In pursuing this agenda, there are responsibilities for all levels of government and for other constituencies. This broad diffusion of responsibility was eloquently expressed in a speech by Governor Dick Riley to the annual convention of the South Carolina School Boards Association in 1984. Governor Riley emphasized how the schools must respond to students who do not meet the new standards mandated by the 1984 legislation in South Carolina:

> Higher standards are meant to enhance the value of public education, and to encourage and motivate students, not to punish them. When students do not meet the new standards, the spirit of the EIA [Education Improvement Act] demands that we respond with care and concern. A student who does not meet the standards should become the center of the school's focused attention, time, and assistance. The student's course of study and placement should be criti-

> cally reviewed to assure that he or she is getting what [he or she needs]. Conferences with parents should be held, wherever and whenever necessary, to get the parents involved. Volunteers—adults and able students—should be mobilized to provide the students with intensive tutorial assistance. The School Improvement Councils should be alerted to keep track of the number of students in this category, what services are being provided to them, and what progress the students are making. Business and industries and other community-based resources should be called upon for help. (Riley, 1984)

Students will need to be made aware of the high priority that they and society must place on their educational progress, and they must be taught to take considerable responsibility for identifying areas in which they are having problems in order to seek assistance. Parents must be made aware of the importance of the parental role in enhancing the education of their children. That role must include stressing the centrality of education to their children. It must include working with teachers and other school authorities to develop supportive learning environments for their children and to assure that their children attend school regularly and do assignments. Parents must also become actively involved in assisting their children where possible. In addition, parents and other community members must hold their schools accountable by participating in school board elections and school councils and by making their concerns known to the responsible authorities. They should also seek to provide voluntary services and other types of assistance which can improve their local schools. Community agencies can also assist in these efforts (National Collaboration for Youth, 1984).

In conjunction with students, parents, and the state education agencies, schools must take the responsibility for formulating strategies and programs to address the educational needs of the disadvantaged. Their responsibilities will include setting goals for narrowing the present gap in educational outcomes, finding particular approaches that are effective, and obtaining the personnel and other resources to implement these approaches. They will also include the establishment of a good system of evaluation which will provide information for teachers, parents, students, and school administrators on the effectiveness of programs. Much of the responsibility must necessarily be placed at the individual school level for implementing the programs. Schools and their managers should be assessed according to how well they are succeeding at meeting learning goals for the disadvantaged.

Colleges and universities must initiate research programs to develop effective strategies for the disadvantaged, to assist local schools in implementing such strategies and carrying out evaluations, and to train educational personnel who will be effective in executing those strategies. Professional educational organizations must take leadership in ensuring that the education of disadvantaged children is a high priority for their members.

Businesses must provide leadership in seeking schools that will ensure a labor force of high quality. They must also monitor schools for the employability of students and provide political support for obtaining the funding and changes that are required to meet em-

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ployment standards (Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Education Commission of the States, 1985; National Academy of Sciences, 1984). In addition, businesses might provide both personnel and technical resources, such as computers, to assist local schools in addressing the educational needs of the disadvantaged as well as providing part-time jobs for youths who might otherwise drop out of school.

The states must provide the leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to launch these reforms and assure their successful implementation. This means that states will need to identify the populations that are at risk, their educational status, and their specific educational needs. It means the establishment of a system of accountability that will be able to monitor progress toward meeting educational goals for these populations. It also means providing the technical assistance to assure that the reforms are carried out efficiently and effectively and that additional funding requirements are satisfied. Clearly, the state departments of education will need to work closely with state legislatures in undertaking this leadership.

There is obviously an important role for the federal government, since many of the results of improved education for the disadvantaged will benefit the nation. Ignoring the problem will surely have important implications for the future economic position of the nation, the preparedness of its armed forces, racial and socioeconomic equality and political harmony, expenditures on welfare and crime, and tax revenues. Thus, the federal government as well as the states will have to consider an expanded role considerably beyond present educational commitments in this direction.

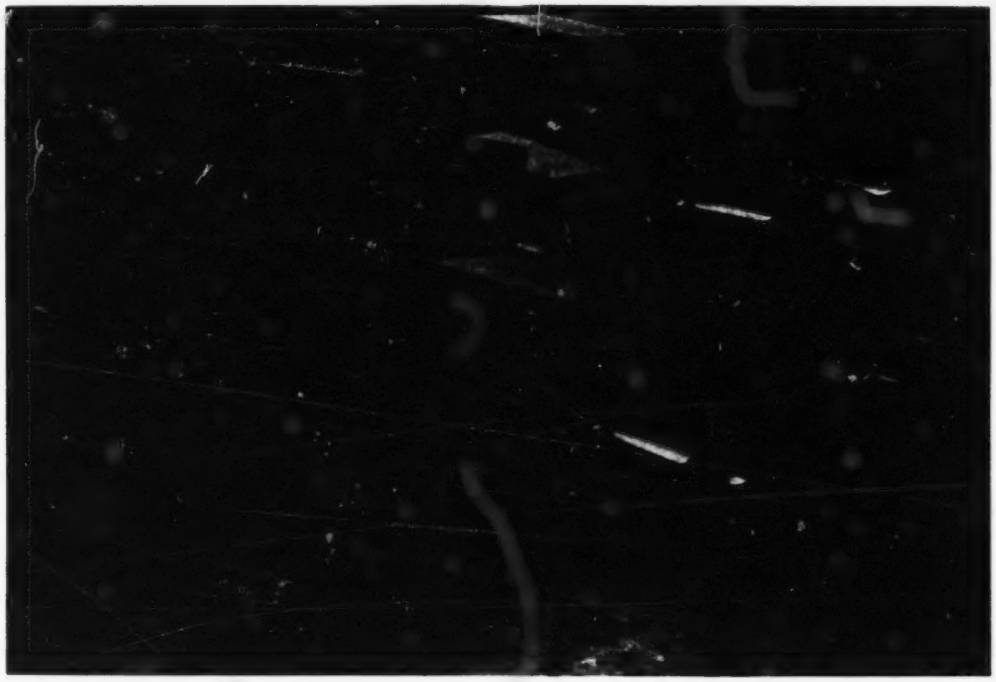
Investing in the Education of the Disadvantaged

Above all, the effort should be viewed as a highly productive investment in the future of our society and economy. This was demonstrated in a study prepared in 1972 for the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity of the U.S. Senate which attempted to ascertain the benefits and costs of assuring adequate education for all citizens (Levin, 1972). At that time, an adequate education for meeting civic, economic, and personal responsibilities was considered to be a minimum of high school completion.

It was found that in 1969 if all males aged 25-34 had completed high school they would receive an additional $237 billion in income over their lifetimes and the federal and state governments would acquire an additional $71 billion in tax revenues. In contrast, the additional cost of providing this level of education was estimated to be about $40 billion. Each dollar of public investment in alleviating inadequate education was estimated to yield about $6 in additional income to the affected population and almost $2 to the state and federal treasuries. In addition, it was estimated that society would have saved about $6 billion annually in the areas of public assistance and crime if all members of the population had received an adequate educaton. If the same relationships were to hold today, the figures would be considerably higher because of both inflation and a larger group of high school dropouts. Even these benefits do not include the returns to society from avoiding social disruption, political turmoil, the anguish of wasted lives, and the social losses from undeveloped artistic and scientific talent.

The large social return from investing in improving the status of the educationally disadvantaged was confirmed more recently in a study of the benefits and costs of preschool interventions for such children (Berrueta-Clement *et al.*, 1984). It was found that 19-year-old disadvantaged youths who had gone to the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, were less involved in antisocial behavior, less likely to be arrested, and less likely to serve juvenile sentences. In addition, they were less likely to repeat grades or to require remedial education at subsequent grade levels, were more likely to graduate and take postsecondary education, and had greater early career success in jobs. It was found that for a single year of preschool the present value of benefits exceeded costs by almost $29,000 a student and that there were $7 in benefits for each $1 of cost (Berrueta-Clement *et al.*, 1984:90). There are few business investments that have this large a return.

As with all social investments, time is of the essence. Schooling requires a considerable gestation period before its payoffs are evident. We must move with a great sense of urgency if we are to avert the costly consequences of our past inaction.



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